

# Parenting Counts

## A Focus on Early Learning

At the Michigan Even Start Family Literacy Consortium meeting held on February 16, 2005, those in attendance learned about this excellent resource from PBS and the Talaris Research Corporation. The training was provided with the hope that Even Start program leaders would use this resource for professional development with their Even Start staff and collaborators. During the training, groups each discussed a different video clip, first synthesizing the key concepts generated by the large group, and then developing strategies that could be used for sharing the information with Even Start staff. Later that week, the training was repeated with a different group of participants. The chart below outlines the ideas generated at both trainings.

Video Clip: <b>Copy Cats</b>	
Key Concepts	Strategies for Sharing With Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children learn by imitation.</li> <li>• Children are watching – the importance of setting a positive example.</li> <li>• Parental awareness of their impact on children.</li> <li>• Parents are their children's first teachers.</li> <li>• Staff modeling helps parents recognize alternative ways of doing things.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Do as I say, not as I do" – staff describe examples of this and alternative approaches.</li> <li>• Staff modeling – have staff reflect/share personal and professional experiences where children have copied something an adult has said or done.</li> <li>• Have staff role play – pick out an activity which is stressful (e.g., a flat tire) – have a "child" copy a "parent."</li> <li>• Pantomime a stressful situation (charades).</li> <li>• Talk with the staff about teachable moments and how to capitalize on them with clients.</li> <li>• Have staff generate ideas for helping parents to recognize that there are consequences to actions, and identify alternatives to destructive behaviors or attitudes.</li> </ul>

Video Clip: **Careful Frank**

Key Concepts	Strategies for Sharing With Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children learn by watching – set a positive example.</li> <li>• Communicating approval - especially encourage new experiences.</li> <li>• The importance of positive language/affirmations.</li> <li>• Expressions (voice, body language) should match tone of voice.</li> <li>• Respond to child's cues (understand child's needs).</li> <li>• The importance of eye contact (on child's level).</li> <li>• Using specific, precise language is vital to development.</li> <li>• Children tune in to expressions.</li> <li>• The face and voice give meaning to communication.</li> <li>• Ways to help understand the "whys" – explain, explicit language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role play with staff (child, adult, evaluator).</li> <li>• Use this video clip to supplement <i>Language is the Key</i>.</li> <li>• Provide staff opportunities to discuss observations of children and parent child interactions.</li> <li>• Use video-tape/tape record interactions (make it a positive, trusting environment to provide feedback and coach staff (variation of <i>You Make the Difference</i>, Hanen)).</li> <li>• Recognize cultural difference – provide play time for staff!</li> <li>• Post reminders around the room – mini plans and cues for staff (e.g., Sing when you're changing diapers).</li> </ul>

Video Clip: **The Book of Jenny**

Key Concepts	Strategies for Sharing With Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay attention to non-verbal cues.</li> <li>• All babies are different.</li> <li>• You need to "study" the child, get answers from watching the child – each child is unique.</li> <li>• Learn from your child.</li> <li>• Sometimes we misread cues.</li> <li>• Parental "stuff" gets in the way of parents applying this.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have staff develop a "Table of Contents" for <u>The Book of Jenny</u> and explain the importance of each chapter.</li> <li>• Use a warm-up exercise that stresses non-verbal cues (e.g., charades, line up by birthday) – have staff experience what it is like to give cues and interpret them.</li> <li>• Ask for examples of cues and chart the answers.</li> <li>• It's possible to misread cues - Shake a rattle in someone's face – observe her reaction – discuss situations where this happens.</li> <li>• Use obstacle course or activity of each person giving someone their purse – overloading them - as an exercise to address barriers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a personality/temperament questionnaire to bring out the idea of “fit” between parent and child.</li> <li>• Show how the environment affects the child – drinking Kool-Aid vs. healthy food, etc.</li> <li>• Give staff a list of community resources.</li> </ul>
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Video Clip: **Rough Day**

Key Concepts	Strategies for Sharing With Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stress is a given so we need to show staff that there are ways to effectively deal with it and then communicate this with families.</li> <li>• How do we deal with our own stress?</li> <li>• Recognize how our stress affects clients (and acknowledge that we <u>do</u> have stress).</li> <li>• When is it appropriate to share our stress with families?</li> <li>• Dealing with stress is a parallel process – it involves everyone (staff and families).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help staff recognize their personal levels of stress by brainstorming the kinds of stress we feel.</li> <li>• Do a scenario based on the same stressor – one with an upbeat mode, the other downbeat.</li> <li>• Use planning techniques/steps to show how stress can be effectively dealt with.</li> <li>• Discuss how to identify resources to review for ideas such as completing a stress inventory.</li> <li>• Set the tone, help staff to recognize how important this is to group work by discussing recent examples of stress in our program.</li> <li>• Develop signals for staff to use to let co-workers know it’s a “bad” day.</li> <li>• Recognize that sometimes we get stressed by our clients, sometimes they get stressed by us.</li> <li>• Use role modeling to discuss when it’s appropriate to share our stress with families.</li> <li>• Use humor.</li> </ul>

Video Clip: **Testing 1,2,3**

Key Concepts	Strategies for Sharing With Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children learn cause and effect through exploration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Trial and error.</li> <li>◦ Safety and repetition.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Babies learn by testing everything.</li> <li>• The importance of safe exploration.</li> <li>• Repetition is important for learning.</li> <li>• Repetition may “try the patience” of adults.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put silly putty ingredients on the table. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Have staff use the ingredients to make something.</li> <li>◦ Through trial and error staff will make silly putty and can play with it.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Show the video clip.</li> <li>• Have staff write on post-it notes questions or comments about the clip, then discuss (pull out key words: trial and error, cause and effect, safety and repetition).</li> <li>• Have staff work in small groups to list how they would use techniques and resources to teach these concepts per their role in the program.</li> <li>• Role play some scenarios.</li> </ul>

Video Clip: **Parentese**

Key Concepts	Strategies for Sharing With Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language development.</li> <li>• Children learn language by being talked to (interaction).</li> <li>• Tune into the child.</li> <li>• Distinguish between baby talk vs. parent talk.</li> <li>• Children do not learn language from television or videos.</li> <li>• Both parents are responsible for language development.</li> <li>• The important role that fathers play in children's learning and development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use language and model actual language to distinguish between baby talk and parentese.</li> <li>• Practice parallel talk, self talk, and interaction (define language development).</li> <li>• Use role modeling to demonstrate different kinds of interactions.</li> <li>• Use PET scans or research to demonstrate the importance of language acquisition and early brain development.</li> <li>• Discuss research related to fathers and the importance of male role models (e.g., The Men in My Life; Bring Daddy to School Day).</li> </ul>